

The Builder.

NUMBER 204.

VOLUME FOR 1847.

SATURDAY, JAN. 2.

OUR FIFTH VOLUME.

IN accordance with custom, we would bespeak, by a few words of kindly introduction, the good will of our readers for our forthcoming volume. We are as much bound to do this by feeling, as bound to it by duty. We desire to stand well with them; to have their confidence: we would enlist their aid and secure their esteem. To be thought honest and useful recorders of facts,—even able expounders of principles (high praise as it would be), is not the extent of our ambition. We would have it felt that we have high objects in view, and are impelled by loftier motives than pecuniary profit or desire for reputation: that we are labouring honestly and sincerely, to advance the well-being and the happiness of our fellow men, and would find greater reward in effecting this than in personal success. That it is so we most seriously aver: and we therefore ask all who have the same end in view, or regard it with the consideration it demands, to give us the hand of fellowship, and look upon us as fellow-labourers in a work of great and universal interest.

The spread of architectural knowledge; the improvement of dwelling-places; the science of heat, of sound, of ventilation; legislative enactments affecting constructions, and the due administration of them; facilities of communication; a dissemination of a knowledge and love of art; and the score of other objects which especially occupy our pages, are but means to an end,—and that end is, the health, well-being, happiness, goodness, of the community at large.

The effect of an ill-ordered dwelling on the health of the inmates, and the connection between health and morals, are becoming understood. When once universally felt, improvements and ameliorations will be adopted more rapidly than they are now. Once make it the public opinion that improvements in this respect must be effected, and the thing is done.

The intimate connection which exists between the good and the beautiful, is not so obvious, but is none the less certain. The assertion of it has been duly scoffed at by those who could not understand it, but has now passed its probation, and is establishing itself in the public mind.

The effect produced on national character by the contemplation of works of art,—fine pictures, exalted statuary, or noble buildings,—is very great; much greater than is generally supposed; and has been too long overlooked in our country. The perfect and general recognition of it would lead to the free admission of the public to all national monuments

and works of art, the adornment of cities, and the exercise of greater care in the selection of designs for public buildings.

Two years ago (in the preface to our third volume) we said, "It must be constantly remarked that architecture, as a *fine art*, is much less understood by the public than as a useful art, whence it follows that our advance in matters of taste is much slower than in matters of utility;" and the observation unfortunately is not yet out of date. On all matters of art the ignorance which prevails is excessive. It will continue to be our aim to spread abroad a knowledge of the principles of criticism, and to cultivate the taste of our readers, so far as we may be able to do so.

The coming year promises to be a busy one. A revised Buildings Act, the prevention of interments in towns, the abolition of the window-tax (a tax on cleanliness, health, and morals), the prevention of smoke, and general sanitary regulations, will probably come before the legislature, and will demand our attention. The new buildings commenced and projected are numerous. Amongst these, in the metropolis alone, we may mention the additions at Buckingham Palace, concerning which the public, up to this time, are entirely ignorant; the Carlton Club-house; Bridgewater House; new Westminster bridge, or whatever else it may be called, if the preposterous proposal to remove it be not defeated; Covent Garden theatre; the new theatre in Leicester-square; a building for the Records; improvements in the city; a score of churches of more or less pretension; and works in connection with the railways, of surprising magnitude.

In the provinces too, much is contemplated; and we shall not fail to give the public full information of what is passing, both there and on the continent.

While we seek to render our journal valuable to architects, engineers, artists, and a large body of general readers, the building trade will find their interests watched and their requirements attended to. All new inventions likely to be of use to them, improvements in construction, new materials, and proceedings under the Buildings Act, will have our continued attention; nor shall we relax in our endeavours to induce a more careful preparation of estimates, and the maintenance of a judicious and enlightened course, as well between themselves and their workmen, as between themselves and their employers.

EXPLOSION OF BOILERS.—The constant occurrence of accidents to steam boilers, is disgraceful to us as a nation in a mechanical point of view, and calls for inquiry. It would seem to be necessary that every boiler should be examined by a public officer before it is sent out.

THE LIFE OF JAMES GANDON, ARCHITECT.

Messrs. HODGINS and SMITH, of Dublin, have made a very interesting addition to architectural biography, in publishing a life of Mr. Gandon.* It contains much valuable matter, and should be read, especially, by every architect who finds his spirits flag under the difficulties which attend him in his profession, even when successful.

GANDON was born on the 29th of February, 1742, in New Bond-street, London, and received his education at a boarding-school, at Kensington Gravel Pits, where he manifested a great predilection for mathematics and drawing. His father, Peter Gandon, becoming a proselyte to the science of alchemy, dissipated in fumes much of his property, and was involved to such an extent by mismanagement, that at fourteen, our hero found himself recalled from school, and thrown entirely on his own resources. Having great love for the arts, he applied himself vigorously to study them, especially architecture and perspective: he read all day, and drew at Shipley's academy (then the best esteemed in London) every evening.

At this time Mr. William Chambers arrived in England from Rome, and being advised to settle here, bought a house in Poland-street. Hearing that he was in need of assistance, some of Gandon's friends advised him to call on Mr. Chambers, and shew his portfolio. The result of which was that Chambers took him into his house as a pupil, with a very moderate fee. Here he was introduced to the late Earl of Charlemont, who continued during his life one of his most attached friends. He obtained many other valuable friends, and when he left Sir William Chambers' office, and commenced practice, appears to have been introduced to good connections.

About the year 1766 (misprinted in the life 1776), he formed the intention of publishing a continuation of the "Vitruvius Britannicus," published by Colin Campbell, and in conjunction with Mr. Woolfe, of the Board of Works, issued two folio volumes before completing his 25th year.

In 1767 he exhibited, at two exhibitions arranged by the Incorporated Society of Artists, a design for a Mausoleum in memory of Handel, erected in the demesne of Sir S. Mordaunt, Staffordshire, and a design for a palace. About this same time he designed a park screen, which was erected in Portman-square, at the residence of the celebrated Mrs. Montague. His energy and industry were of no ordinary kind, for between 1766-1769 he had, in addition to the works we have spoken of, gained the premium for designs for the Court House of Nottingham (afterwards erected), obtained the gold medal offered by the Royal Academy, then just established (1768), and furnished designs for the Royal Exchange in Dublin. It seems that when he saw the Academy medal advertised, he was not a student, and therefore was not eligible; he however quickly removed that disability, and carried off the prize,—the subject of the design was a triumphal arch, commemorative of the seven years' war. Chambers appears to have

* "The Life of James Gandon, Esq., M.R.I.A., with original notices of contemporary artists, and fragments of MSS." From materials collected by his Son. Edited by the late Mr. T. J. Mulvany, R. H. A. Hodges and Smith, Dublin: 1846.